

CHAPTER 1: HAPPINESS

It was **3:42 AM** when the city exhaled its last breath of stillness. Neon lights buzzed like wasps above a cracked sidewalk. In a narrow alley off 7th and Vine, slumped against a dumpster reeking of rot and stale regrets, sat a man named **Teagan**.

His fingers were trembling. A cigarette, damp and half lit, danced between two knuckles. His eyes, bloodshot and hollow, searched the world for something...anything that felt real.

The burn still warmed him, **but his soul felt like a ghost dragging chains through tar.**

That was when he saw it. A book. Small and made from Leather. Resting perfectly upright on the damp concrete like someone had just placed it there with purpose.

"How To Stay Sober"

Teagan blinked. He scoffed with a bitter laugh, picked up the book, thumbed through the pages. Empty. Blank. Not a word inside. **"Figures,"** he muttered, tossing it behind him without a second glance.

But the book didn't stay gone. **Three days later, Teagan** was back in the same alley, drawn by the phantom tug of craving.

The world outside the alley was too bright, too loud, too full of expectations. In the alley, no one judged you. No one asked him to feel anything.

As he reached into his backpack for a dirty kit, his hand brushed something foreign. The book. Same title. Same leather. Still blank.

Over the next week, **the book showed up in impossible places.** On the bathroom sink at the shelter where he crashed. On a bar stool next to him before he passed out.

Each time, **Teagan's** defiance crumbled a little more. It wasn't until the morning he found it in the pocket of his own coat, an oversized one with that he hadn't worn in months. He tore it open, expecting more empty pages.

But this time, there was ink. Words danced like fire across the parchment:

"The first rule of staying sober: You must choose yourself every damn day, even when the world doesn't."

Teagan stared.

The letters shimmered as if they were alive, as if the page was breathing with him. His hands shook...not from withdrawal, but from something unfamiliar.

Hope.

That night, **Teagan didn't use.**

He read.

The book now spilled its secrets like a confessional:

"Find your rhythm before the cravings find you."

"Replace the ritual, not just the substance."

"Build a fortress of people who don't need to be high to love you."

"Scream. Cry. Shatter. Just don't use."

Outside, the world remained merciless. Dealers waited like shadows. Former friends hissed invitations from street corners.

"Just a taste. Come on, Teagan."

Teagan held the book to his chest like armor, shouted **"NO!"** and ran.

Recovery wasn't easy.

There were nights he clawed at his skin, every cell in his body begging for the rush.

There were days he sat in group therapy, silent, while others spilled their truths. Their pain made him weep, **but he couldn't yet find the words for his own.**

He got a job sweeping floors at a diner. He started journaling by hand in the back pages of the book.

Every day, he wrote something. Anything.

"I feel happy today."

"I saw the sun and didn't flinch."

"I called my sister. She didn't hang up."

Bit by bit, life returned.

But the battle wasn't just about staying clean. It was about staying alive.

Staying human.

Staying real.

Teagan still struggles. Some days, the war feels closer than others. **But he's still here.** And every time he wants to use he remembers the second rule in the book:

"Your recovery is your revolution."

Teagan's days began to change for the better. Slowly, quietly, like the tide reshaping a jagged shoreline. The book **"How To Stay Sober"** stayed by his side.

No longer vanishing,

No longer teasing him like a ghost.

Its worn spine and aged, leather-bound cover had become as familiar as his own breath.

He would wake, open to a page, and read. The ink seemed to shimmer sometimes, the letters rearranging themselves into the exact words he needed.

One morning, it read:

"Sobriety is not a war against the drug, it is remembering of who you were before the drug lied to you."

That line stayed with him as he poured the substances down the drain.

As he deleted numbers.

As he sweated out his regrets.

CHAPTER 2: TEAGAN'S TRIUMPH

Teagan began walking the streets of the city with a steadier step, his eyes lifted from the cracked sidewalks.

He began attending meetings like **Narcotics Anonymous**, peer-led groups, anything with a chair and a circle. He didn't speak much at first. But people saw it in his eyes.

The pain.

The fight.

The flicker of belief.

What no one knew was that the book followed him.

One night, he walked into a halfway house and left the book on the kitchen counter while he went to the bathroom. When he returned, **it was gone**.

A young man named **Charles** stood holding it, flipping through the pages.

"What is this?" Charles asked, brows furrowed.

Teagan paused. **"You can see it?"**

Charles signaled slowly. **"Yeah...but...it's weird. I swear I've never seen this here before."**

Teagan studied his face. There was exhaustion behind his eyes, the kind that went deeper than sleep could fix.

"Maybe you're starting to believe and want it," said **Teagan**.

"Want what?"

"A different ending."

Charlie gave a soft, crooked smile. **"Yeah. Maybe."**

But the next day, the book was back with **Teagan**.

Charlie stated that it had vanished from his bed. No one else had seen it. Some laughed, calling it junkie ghost stories.

Others whispered when **Teagan** wasn't around. Not out of mockery but reverence. **Hope**. They saw how far he had come, how his hands no longer trembled.

They applauded him in silence. A few in private. One by one, they started asking him how to start. What he did. How it felt to go just one full day without using. And **Teagan** told them, eyes steady, voice low and calm: **"You have to believe it first. Even when it feels like a lie."**

Years passed.

Teagan was still sober.

He now ran a center of his own, in the same neighborhood where he used to score.

The chairs in his group meetings were always full, the coffee always fresh, and the walls covered with scribbled notes and poems from those who came before.

And the book? **It stayed with him.**

Or rather, it stayed nearby. Because sometimes it would disappear again, only to show up in a subway station or a broken-down shelter or beside the bunk of someone who was right on the edge.

He heard stories and rumors, mostly from other recovering addicts.

"Some book just showed up. Said something I can't even explain."

"The guilt disappeared after I opened it. I swear it knew my name."

Only a few had ever seen it more than once because the book didn't appear to those who didn't want it.

It appeared to those who needed it,

But only if they believed they wanted to truly change.

It wasn't **just** magic.

it was a mirror.

Teagan knew that now and he was proud to say that the mirror had shown him someone worth saving. Somewhere, in a quiet apartment with broken blinds, a new hand reached for the book.

A whisper on the page: **"Welcome. Let's begin."**

CHAPTER 3: THE RAIN

The rain had been relentless all day, drumming against the grimy windows of **Ruby's** tiny apartment in Brooklyn. The kind of rain that washed the city streets into slick rivers of neon **reflections and regret**.

Ruby sat on the edge of her couch, arms wrapped tight around herself, staring at the cracked ceiling as memories crawled through her mind like unwelcome shadows.

She used to dream big. A kid from New York with fire in her soul, guitar slung over her shoulder, voice raw and full of promise.

But the city had other plans.

The dim clubs where she played **got smaller, the crowds fewer, and the nights darker**. She became fueled not by ambition but by a gnawing ache she tried to numb.

Her hands trembled, cravings gnawing deep. The bottle of cheap vodka on the table stared back at her like an old enemy. She reached out, brushing her fingers on the neck of the bottle, but hesitated.

Then, as if from nowhere, **a book landed beside her on the couch**, as if dropped by an invisible hand.

"How To Stay Sober"

She blinked, confused. She had never seen this book before. The cover was soft, the title embossed in gold that flickered under the dim light like a promise or a dare.

Ruby's eyes locked on it. She wanted to reject it, to shove it away like all the other things she'd tried: meetings, pamphlets, desperate cries for help that ended in silence.

But something about the book tugged at her, as if it knew the fight she was in.

Her fingers curled around it, heart hammering. Opening it, she found words not just written, but alive and breathing with truth and struggle and hope.

“Every step away from the edge is a victory, even when you stumble.”

Tears blurred her vision.

The pain of the city faded.

For a moment, **Ruby** felt seen, understood.

But the battle wasn’t over.

The cravings snarled beneath her skin, dark and relentless.

She read on, pages guiding her through storms she knew all too well: **sleepless nights, the weight of loneliness, the pull of old ghosts.** The book didn’t promise miracles, only a hard, **honest** path.

That night, with the rain still singing against the windowpanes, **Ruby** made a choice. Not a **perfect one, but the first step.**

She would fight.

She would try.

And somewhere deep inside, she believed this book. This strange, persistent visitor was not here by accident. The days that followed were a mess of exhaustion and determination.

Ruby clung to the book like a lifeline, reading its pages in passing moments, on the crowded subway, under flickering streetlights, and at the broken kitchen table where she ate little but nursed a heavy silence.

CHAPTER 4: WHO AM I?

Each time the urge to slip back into old habits gnawed at her, the book seemed to reappear. Her fingers searched blindly on the floor beneath her bed and there it was, resting like a silent sentinel. She almost laughed at the coincidence, but deep down, **she knew this was no accident.**

The book found her because she wanted to be found.

Her friends in the city noticed her absence from their usual late-night haunts.

At first, they joked about her **“losing her edge,”** but **Ruby** didn’t mind. She couldn’t explain what was happening, at least not yet. She knew the pull toward the abyss had loosened just a little.

On a Tuesday evening, **Ruby** found herself at the edge of a crumbling pier, staring out into the darkness. The storm inside her felt as wild and untamable as the tempest outside.

She clutched the book tight and read aloud the words that echoed inside her:

“Healing isn’t perfect. Sometimes, the darkest nights bring the brightest dawns.”

A gust of wind swept her hair back as if the city itself was listening. That night, for the first time in months, **Ruby didn’t reach for the bottle.**

Instead, she walked home in the rain, the book pressed against her chest, a fragile spark glowing faintly inside her.

Later, **Ruby** sat in a small café, flipping through the pages, her eyes heavy but resolute. Around her, **the city bustled, indifferent, loud, and alive.** She imagined the book appearing for others too, but she knew it was different for them.

Not everyone wanted it as badly as she did.

Not everyone believed.

She remembered overhearing a conversation at a support group once: someone mentioned seeing a book just like hers but never opening it. **That made it different.** The book wasn't just an object; it was a mirror, reflecting the hunger and hope inside each person.

For **Ruby**, the book was a compass, guiding her through storms of doubt and moments when the past threatened to swallow her soul.

At night, she wrote in a worn notebook she kept tucked away.

“This isn't just about staying sober. It's about finding myself again, piece by piece, in a world that sometimes feels designed to break me. But I won't give up. Not yet.”

The book sat beside her on the windowsill, catching the glow of the streetlamps like a quiet guardian.

One evening, when the city's pulse slowed and the neon lights bled into the dark sky, **Ruby** ran into an old friend who barely recognized her.

“How do you keep going?” he asked, voice low.

Ruby smiled, the kind of smile born from battles fought in silence.

“There's this book,” she said, pulling **“How To Stay Sober”** from her bag like a secret weapon. **“It saved me. I have to do the work. But it's there when I need it. It's magic. And maybe that magic is just believing that I deserve to be better.”**

Her friend looked down at the book, hesitation flickering in his eyes. **Ruby** nodded.

“You have to want it. All you have to do is want it. Then it will find you.”

The journey was far from over. The road was riddled with temptation and pain, but **Ruby** no longer walked it alone.

Sometimes the right book finds the right person at the right time and with belief, even the smallest spark can ignite a wildfire inside.

CHAPTER 5: WINTER

Winter didn't just visit...it **lingered**.

The gray skies were oppressive, low hanging blankets that muted the world below. The snow crusted the city in hard, off-white ridges.

The streets hissed under salt and slush. And in a small second-floor apartment above a shuttered laundromat, **Emma** sat with her knees pulled to her chest, watching frost bloom along the inside of the window.

Her room was **cold, quiet, and littered with the remnants of survival:**

an ashtray overflowing on the sill

a stack of unpaid bills

and prescription bottles turned label down in a drawer she hadn't opened in days.

She used to be vibrant. That's what people said, "**Emma, you have a light in you.**" But over the years, the light dimmed, worn away by a world that kept asking her to be okay **when she wasn't.**

Emma had learned how to disappear without leaving the room.

That day, one of many indistinguishable days, she saw the book for the first time.

It wasn't there the night before. But when she stumbled back from the kitchen with a mug of lukewarm coffee, there it sat on her bed.

A dark purple book, nearly black in dim light, with gold embossing on the spine.

"How To Stay Sober."

Emma blinked. Her hands trembled, coffee sloshing over the edge of the mug.

“Nope,” she muttered, backing away as if the book had grown teeth. **“Not today.”**

She tried before. **AA meetings, detox centers, even that counselor her aunt paid for one summer.** Each time she failed, it felt like a deeper nail into her coffin. What made this different? Some mysterious book that showed up like a magic trick?

Emma tossed it into the corner.

But that night, she couldn't sleep.

The wind howled against the apartment. Pipes clanged. She curled under the blanket and stared at the ceiling, **haunted by memories she had locked away.**

She turned her head and the book appeared again.

Right where her alarm clock usually sat.

Emma froze.

A second passed. Then another. And then she reached out, fingertips grazing the cover. It was warm. Not metaphorically...**it was actually warm.**

And it smelled faintly like lavender and something familiar. Something comforting. Like rain on pavement.

She opened it.

Inside, the words **weren't preachy. They didn't scream or scold or shame. They whispered.**

They told stories of others like her. People who had stumbled, broke open, and still found a way to stand. There were quotes handwritten in the margins, different colors, different handwriting styles. One read:

"You don't have to heal the whole world. Just the piece of it you touch."

Emma didn't know who wrote it, but she wept.

Something inside her broke, not with pain, but with relief.

The days that followed weren't easy. The book didn't fix her. But it gave her a reason to try again.

She walked into a support group one icy Thursday, the purple book tucked tightly under her arm. Her voice shook as she introduced herself, but she said the words:

"Hi, I'm Emma. And I'm... I'm trying again."

Some of the others smiled. One or two clapped quietly.

No one mocked her. No one turned away.

After the meeting, a woman with a soft smile sat beside her. **"I saw that book once,"** she whispered. **"But I didn't open it. Maybe next time it comes to me..."**

Emma met her eyes. **"You have to want it. Bad. I think that's the trick."**

CHAPTER 6: MAKE THE DAY YOURS

A few months later, she went to visit her mother's grave for the first time in three years. She didn't cry. Not until she pulled the book from her coat and placed it gently at the base of the tombstone.

"Thank you for everything," she whispered. **"I think I'm going to be okay."** When she returned home, the book was back on her nightstand. Same color. Same weight. Same warmth.

As if to say, **"Not done yet."**

Emma began to write in the margins too.

"Some days, healing feels like bleeding. But I'll keep bleeding if it means I'm still alive."

She didn't know who might read it after her, but the idea that someone might...That was enough for her. One night, her sister called. They hadn't spoken in over a year.

"I heard you're doing better," her sister said softly. **"I'm proud of you."**

Emma wiped her eyes.

"Thanks," she whispered. **"I had some help."**

She looked at the book...dark and purple, glowing gently in the moonlight.

The morning sun glowed different now. Where once it pushed through the broken blinds and made her groan from the weight of sorrow, now it spilled golden light onto crisp white sheets.

Emma stretched, smelling the scent of peppermint oil she'd begun diffusing before bed. Her window was open, letting in the late-spring air. No sirens, no slamming doors just the soft hum of a city waking up.

Three hundred and sixty-five days.

She was now a full year sober.

She sat on the edge of her bed, hands in her lap, the dark purple book still resting on her nightstand. It hadn't moved in weeks. Not on its own, at least. It stayed now, quiet, still, like a companion who no longer needed to speak, just to exist.

She ran a finger along its spine. **"We did it,"** she whispered.

Emma never expected to return to **NovaLab**, the startup that once nearly cost her everything.

It was there, working long nights in branding and design, that she began to crumble.

The pressure.

The culture.

The endless praise masking silent panic.

Every product launch was a firestorm. Every office party, an excuse to drink like nothing mattered.

She had passed out in their parking garage, woken up to flashing lights and the whisper of EMTs saying she was lucky to be alive.

NovaLab cut her loose with silence.

No farewell.

No apology.

Just a final paycheck and an HR email.

But life is strange when you grow.

When **Emma** got clean, her creativity returned sharper than ever.

Fierce, focused, and burning with clarity. She started her own design consultancy, and soon, startups were knocking. Her name built trust. Her work became known for its balance: clean visuals, authentic branding, emotional depth.

Two years into her sobriety, **NovaLab** came knocking again. But this time, with an offer.

The company crashed. A financial scandal. Investors bailed. Morale shattered. They needed someone to rebrand, rebuild, and reinvent.

Emma laughed the first time she read the email. “**The same company that discarded me?**” she said out loud to herself.

But the book was sitting beside her that night.

And it felt like something wanted her to look deeper.

CHAPTER: 7: NEVER GIVE UP

Six months later, **Emma** sat behind the glass desk in the **CEO's** office of **NovaLab**. The building had been redesigned. No more sterile gray cubicles. No more hollow, toxic silence.

She wore a soft blue blazer, her hair tied back, the purple book tucked into her desk drawer like a talisman.

At **10:00 AM**, she led her weekly **"Open Table"** session. She started with a quote from the book.

This morning's quote:

"We are not our worst moments. We are our ability to grow from them."

She looked around the room, dozens of employees, some young, others scarred from the last regime. All listening.

"I used to sit at one of these desks," Emma said.

"I used to think I had to be perfect. That I couldn't fail. That needing help meant weakness."

She paused.

"I want you to know... those days are over. Here, we believe in second chances. I'm one of them."

The room broke into applause.

Later that day, she was asked to speak on a local panel about **leadership** and **recovery**. She shared her story, **not to glamorize pain, but to normalize healing**. To show what's possible when you stop running.

But not every day was easy.

There were still moments.

Late nights when the pressure crept back in. When the board demanded numbers and the old anxiety whispered cruel doubts. On those nights, she opened the book, **not for answers, but for grounding.**

She found notes she forgot she wrote:

"Don't forget how far you've come. Pain didn't win."

"You are allowed to forgive yourself, even if no one else does."

One night, walking home from the office, **Emma** passed the infamous alleyway where she used to get loaded. The air smelled like damp concrete and **regret.**

And there, sitting on the edge of a broken crate, was a girl no older than twenty. Skinny. Hollow-eyed. Clutching herself like she could disappear into her jacket.

Emma paused.

The girl looked up, startled.

Emma pulled something from her bag. The book. The dark purple cover still intact, still warm.

"You don't have to take it," Emma said. "But I did. And it changed everything."

The girl stared. Then slowly, carefully, took the book in both hands.

Later that night, **Emma** returned home and found a new copy waiting on her bed.

The color was different now, a lighter lavender, **gentle and full of peace.**

Inside the first page, in fresh handwriting, was a new message:

"The story continues. Because you chose to share it."

CHAPTER 8: THE FOREST DOOR

Theresa didn't believe in miracles.

She didn't believe in fairy tales, second chances, or **"help."** Not when help meant **therapy she couldn't afford, or a hotline where someone read from a script, pretending to care.**

Not when she went home to a place that smelled like stale alcohol, moldy drywall, and disappointment.

She especially didn't believe in **magical books** so when the woman handed it to her in the alley, she almost tossed it right away.

Dark purple. Leather-bound. No title on the spine.

She thought it might be a Bible, or one of those **"You Deserve Better"** self-help nightmares. She kept walking. But the book stayed with her.

And later that night, when she was lying in bed with the dull ache of withdrawal chewing on her bones and her boyfriend's texts silent for the fourth night in a row, she reached for it like a reflex.

No title. No name. Just a first page:

"This book will help save you. Believe in it and it will help you save yourself and others."

Theresa closed it immediately and laughed bitterly. **"Who would write this?"**

She tried using again the next morning. Tried to chase that blur, that wave, the thing that made her forget how hollow her mother's eyes had become. How her father screamed louder when he drank and quieter when he was sober, neither version loving.

She texted **Cam**, her boyfriend.

No reply.

By noon, she was pacing back and forth. **Everyone had lied to her.**

Her friends.

Cam.

Even her own blood.

She ducked into the same alley, trembling with cold and confusion.

And there it was again, the book.

She had left it at home. **She swore she left it at home.**

Now it sat perched on the crate.

She snatched it up, heartbeat cracking.

Back home, she threw it across the room. **"I don't want this!"** she screamed at the book. **"I'm not ready. I'm not...whatever you think I am!"**

But the book didn't vanish. It stayed where it landed, spine unbent, unmoved, still dark purple.

Days passed.

She started seeing it more.

In the alley.

In her backpack after leaving it zipped up all day.

Once, even in the public library, near a book about **Psychology and Trauma.**

Each time, the same message greeted her.

"This book will help save you. Believe in it and it will help you save yourself and others."

Finally, **Theresa** sat on the edge of her twin mattress and opened it, letting it fall open to a random page.

There were no chapters. No table of contents. Only entries, some short, some long, some written like journal confessions, others like mantras carved in stone.

"The people who failed you don't define you."

"You don't have to set yourself on fire to keep others warm."

"Pain is a story that only ends when you start writing it yourself."

For the first time in her seventeen years of life, **she cried without shame.**

The book changed colors overnight.

She found it resting on her chest the next morning, glowing with a soft, forest green hue.

Theresa didn't use.

And then came the second day. Then the third. And by the end of the first week, she had started keeping a log.

Each clean day marked by a leaf she drew into the back of the book. Little green sketches. One for each sunrise she faced without needing to hide.

She started skipping hangouts with Cam. He blew up her phone at first. Then he got mean. Then he went silent. She saw the pictures on social media, him with her so-called **best friend**, pretending they'd always been together.

She didn't cry.

Instead, she walked into the local clinic and asked for help. **It was the hardest thing she'd ever done.**

The waiting room.

The stares.

The questions.

The blood tests.

She talked about her life: About her father. About her mom sleeping until **4:00 PM** every day. About the things **Cam** pressured her into.

The clinic counselor...a tall and confident woman with kind eyes never judged her once.

"I've seen worse," she said. "But it doesn't matter. Because I see you. And you're still here. That counts."

They built a plan.

Group meetings.

A temporary safe house to get out of her home.

Nutrition guidance.

Theresa couldn't believe it.

Even a mental health advocate who understood addiction from firsthand experience.

Each night, the book gave her something new.

One month in, she got a letter from **Emma**. A personal letter, handwritten, thanking **Theresa** for choosing herself. For not throwing the book away. For trying.

Emma invited her to visit **NovaLab** when she was ready.

Theresa was now three months sober.

Theresa sat in a circle of others like her. A peer support group where no one was famous. No one was perfect. They passed the book around, not just hers, but others too. **Ruby's. Teagan's.** All slightly different in color, in handwriting, in spirit.

A network of survivors. A constellation of comebacks. As she walked home that night under the city's silver moon, she looked down at the forest green book in her arms. It glowed softly like a lantern guiding her steps.

She whispered into the cool wind:

"Maybe I don't believe in miracles. But I believe in this."

And the book pulsed once in her hands, as if it heard her.

It was the first spring morning where the light filtered through **Theresa's** bedroom window just right, no shadows, no memories crawling out of the corners. Just golden warmth embracing her skin like a quiet promise.

She had made it.

Not to the end, because sobriety didn't have one, but to a place where she could finally say, with confidence: **"I'm proud of myself."**

And the forest green book? It sat calmly on her nightstand, its cover now etched with her name in delicate silver cursive. The pages fluttered sometimes, as if breathing with her, keeping rhythm with the quiet peace she'd built.

But that peace didn't come easily. **She earned it.**

CHAPTER 9: REPAIR

Her parents weren't the kind to admit they were broken. Her mom had been **"tired"** for years, a ghost in a robe. Her dad had always shrugged off his drinking as **"just a few after work."** But for once, **Theresa** had stopped making excuses for them.

For once, she held up a mirror to her parents: gently, lovingly, but firmly.

She came home one afternoon with brochures from her counselor. A small envelope for each of them. Inside: a note.

"You're not bad people. But please recognize that you are hurting people. I believe we can fix this. Together." - Theresa

It started with silence. Then yelling. Then doors slamming. But a week later, her mom entered the living room with eyes crimson red from tears and said simply, **"I don't want to be this way anymore."**

Her dad followed two days later, sober for the first time in a week, voice cracked. **"Do you really think this book could help?"**

She didn't answer with words. She just simply opened the book for them.

Theresa sat between her parents in a cramped therapist's office every Wednesday for two months. It wasn't magic. **It was messy.**

There were tears. Confessions. Ugly truths about how her dad's father used to drink himself into silence, and how her mom's depression started after losing her sister and no one ever asked how she was doing. Years of grief unraveled like tangled wire.

But somewhere in the chaos, **they found each other again.**

Her mom started gardening again. Her dad joined a sobriety support group. He even wrote her a note one night and left it on her pillow.

"I don't know how I became the man who hurt his daughter. But I promise I'll spend every day becoming the father you deserved."

They weren't perfect. But they were present. And sometimes, being present is the greatest gift of all.

It was **Emma** who helped **Theresa** confront the final ghost.

Cam.

Her phone buzzed one day with a blurry photo of **Cam**, at a party, passed out, surrounded by her old friends, substances on the table. **The photo disgusted her.** Her chest clenched, not from jealousy, but from clarity.

He hadn't changed.

She had.

"I saw the signs," she told **Emma** later. **"But I didn't want to be alone."**

"You're not alone anymore," **Emma** said

Theresa blocked Cam that night. Not out of rage. **But out of freedom.**

Emma didn't just become a mentor. She became a lighthouse.

When she offered **Theresa** a job at **NovaLab**, **Theresa** didn't hesitate. **She passed the drug test with flying colors.** She stepped into the office with wide eyes and trembling joy.

The first paycheck brought tears to her eyes. Not because it was large (though it was), but because it was hers. **It was earned with dignity.**

But the vision in her heart was even bigger than a job.

It was a calling

Theresa opened her journal that night and wrote:

"I used to be the girl who cried herself to sleep in a broken house, wondering if I mattered. Now, I build homes inside the hearts of others."

The forest green book glowed quietly in her drawer, as if smiling. The books were more than just pages. They were doorways.

To purpose.

To healing.

To happiness.

CHAPTER 10: BRIGHT RED

The Los Angeles nights were cruel.

Cars buzzed past the underpass like they were trying to forget the world beneath them. Neon lights blinked overhead, casting sharp shadows across alleyways where hope came and went.

Adam curled into his jacket on the concrete sidewalk. The streetlamp flickered above him, pulsing like a tired heartbeat.

He had a blanket, **but it smelled like mildew.** His shoes were torn. His fingers, splintered.

The smell of stale fries and exhaust lingered in the air. L.A. was beautiful to tourists. To **Adam**, it was a revolving door of broken promises.

He remembered the day it all began, the moment he first turned to alcohol as a means to escape the pain. **He lost his family in a car accident.**

The only thing that could fix his pain was booze. Each sip was a temporary relief, a way to silence the voices that whispered his failures and regrets.

But what started as an escape quickly morphed into a prison, trapping him in a cycle of dependency that felt inescapable. **Adam's** past was littered with broken relationships, lost opportunities, and nights spent in the haze of intoxication, desperately searching for solace in the bottom of a bottle.

He hadn't always been like this.

There was a time, a lifetime ago, when he had a studio apartment, a girlfriend who painted murals, and a guitar he played in Venice for extra cash. Then came the drinks, the chaos, and finally, the silence. Friends faded. **So did music.**

Now? He was invisible.

Until the book.

It appeared on top of the trash can beside the 7-Eleven. Bright red. So clean it looked fake. It didn't belong there.

Adam blinked. **"What is this?"**

He picked it up slowly, like it might burn. The cover simply read:

"How To Stay Sober"

The book had blank pages, but the book held a certain promise, a glimpse of hope amidst the shadows that had enveloped **Adam's** life for far too long.

He was a man shaped by his traumas, **each scar telling a story of loss, regret, and fleeting moments of weakness that led him down a path of self-destruction.**

Adam was surrounded by the remnants of his past. His fingers brushed against the cover of the book he had discovered.

It seemed to leap out at him, a challenge and an invitation all at once.

He scoffed.

"Funny joke."

He tossed it into the garbage, grabbed the half-eaten bagel beside it, and walked off.

But two days later, it was on his pillow. If a pillow could be made of bundled old shirts in a city park.

Same red. Same words.

He opened it this time.

Inside were pages written in a language that read directly into his soul.

Not preachy.

Not clinical.

But real.

"Day One is hard. Not because of what you lose. But because of what you remember."

"You are not your last mistake."

"Sobriety isn't a mountain you climb. It's a path you choose every day."

Finding this book felt calming to **Adam**. It seemed to understand his struggles, resonating with every word he read.

The pages were filled with stories from others who had faced their demons head on and emerged happy to bask in the light of sobriety.

He was mesmerized by the vulnerability of their stories, many echoing his own experiences: **broken homes, lost loved ones, moments of desperation when the pain felt overwhelming.**

Adam closed it. The book throbbed faintly in his hands, warm.

He hadn't cried in five years. **He cried then.**

He read the book cover to cover under a bridge, lit only by the fire in an oil drum. **Each word felt like it had been written for him.**

As he closed the book, he felt something shift within him. It was a fragile yet resolute hope, a determination to confront the darkness that had followed him for so long.

Adam's journey wouldn't be easy; **he knew that.** But the words he had absorbed served as a powerful reminder that recovery is a possibility, one day at a time.

In that moment, he made a promise to himself: **he would not let his past define his future.** The road ahead would be difficult, **but he had a map now.**

With each step, **Adam** would learn to navigate the complexities of his emotions **without** the need of substances. **He was ready to honor his struggles and take back his life, one sober moment at a time**

The next day, he approached a clinic downtown. **He got laughed at.**

But he came back again. And again. Until a woman named **Amy** took his name down.

A week later, he was in a cot, shaking, sweating, hallucinating. The withdrawals were hell. **But the book never left his side.**

He read it between convulsions. **Held it when he couldn't sleep.** Whispered its mantras like prayers.

He stayed.

He survived.

Adam shaved. Got a fresh set of clothes from a charity drive. Took up volunteering to clean up the local parks he once slept in.

One day, a woman walked by painting a mural of a Phoenix.

It was his ex.

She stared.

He stared.

Tears. Laughter. Apologies. Closure.

He **didn't** ask for her back. **She didn't offer.** But they sat on a bench for hours, like the ghosts of who they used to be, finally finding peace.

Adam saved enough from a city work program to buy a secondhand guitar. Played near Venice again.

Not for money but for memory.

He began speaking at shelters.

He had **once** been invisible. **Now, he was the fire.**

CHAPTER 11:

MAHOGANY

Diego's hands had always known work. **Real work.**

The kind that left calluses on your palms and pain in your back that crept up your spine like a whisper. In Puerto Rico, he worked construction, loaded cargo, swept streets, anything that paid. But he always hoped for better. A clean slate. **A life worthy of his son.**

He ended up in a slum, sleeping on worn out floors, scrounging for odd jobs. One day temping at a warehouse, the next scrubbing kitchens in the dead of night.

It wasn't enough.

Not for rent.

Not for food.

Not for the prescriptions his son needed after his asthma flared up.

That's when **they** found him.

A gang that watched from the shadows, approached with smooth voices and soft threats.

They offered cash. Not much at first. Then more.

The job?

Moving product.

Fast. Quiet. Dangerous.

Diego told himself it was only temporary.

But the guilt tore at him. As time went on he used some of the stash to numb the guilt. First to take the edge off. Then to sleep. Then to wake. Then just to

breathe. The man who once dreamed of freedom became a victim to a substance he couldn't pronounce **but couldn't live without.**

Then came the moment that broke him.

He came home late. **The stash was gone.** His son, **Angel**, only **six years old**, had found the foil-wrapped temptation.

He thought it was candy.

Diego's scream that night shook the walls.

Angel was gone. And **Diego** was arrested.

Manslaughter. Possession. Intent to distribute.

20 years.

In prison, time moved differently.

Cold. Stale. Repeating.

Most days **Diego** stared at a broken piece of concrete in the wall above his bed. **It knew all his regrets.**

Then one morning, **a book lay on his pillow.**

Mahogany brown. Weathered, but elegant.

"How To Stay Sober"

He turned it over in his hand. **No one claimed to have placed it there.**

He flipped open the first page.

"You are not the worst thing you've ever done."

"Redemption is built one choice at a time."

"Your pain is not a prison. Unless you let it be."

He clutched the book against his chest. For the first time in years, he prayed. Not just for forgiveness.

But for strength.

Diego read the book every night. When cell lights dimmed and inmates muttered through the walls, he whispered the lines like scripture.

He attended meetings in prison.

Sat in circles with people who shared their own confessions. He told them about **Angel**. About Puerto Rico. About his guilt.

Some cried.

Some patted his back.

Some stayed silent.

But all of them listened.

He wrote letters to **Angel** every week.

“I’m still your father,” he wrote. **“I’m still trying.”**

Years passed. The mahogany book never faded. If anything, it grew richer in color.

One guard even asked where he got it. **Diego** said he didn’t know. **It found him.**

He read the book every night.

He stopped using. Helped others quit inside. Became someone the younger inmates looked up to. The light returned slowly, **one word at a time.**

“You can’t go back. But you can choose who walks forward with you.”

“Love doesn’t end. Pain doesn’t win. You are still worthy.”

When **Diego** left prison, he had nothing but the book and his name.

But he now walked a straight line.

Got a job washing dishes. Then cooking. Then managing a kitchen. Within **three years.**

He opened a food truck with the name **“Angel's Empanadas.”**

People came from blocks away for his food, **especially** his empanadas.

He partnered with other food trucks. Created programs for ex-cons to learn culinary skills. Built sober housing. People listened. Eventually **Diego** ran for local office.

And won.

The book never left his side.

Each day, he'd return to the place he now called home, pour a cup of coffee, and sit solemnly in front of a small, framed photo of him and **Angel**, both smiling under the Puerto Rican sun.

"I hope I became the father you needed," he whispered.

A tear slid down his cheek.

The book, sitting nearby, pulsed. The glow grew.

Brighter. Fiercer.

Then he heard it. A voice, clear and strong.

"I love you, Dad. I always will. It wasn't your fault. You mean everything to me."

The glow faded slowly.

He looked back at the photo.

Somehow, impossibly, the smile on **Angel's** face looked a little bigger.

And for the first time...**Diego smiled back.**

CHAPTER 12: SORROW

Seattle was cloaked in sorrow. The fog curled in the sky like a ghost with unfinished business.

And in a worn-out group home tucked into the gritty edge of town, **Eliza** sat on the windowsill, depressed, watching the water smear the world into watercolor blurs.

Her arms bore the pale echoes of scars. Her eyes were tired and empty. **She was not who she used to be.**

She had once been a musician. Jazz, mostly. She was good enough to win scholarships. But then she met him...**the man with the fast words and slow poison.** He promised **love, adventure, and happiness forever.**

Instead, he gave her a hollow life of **lock-picks, late nights, and lungs full of misery.**

She was riddled with regret. She had stolen from old women. Pickpocketed tourists.

Everyone was a target.

Eliza lied to her sister, her grandmother, **her own reflection.** All to feed **his** appetite. And hers. Though, truth be told, he always kept most of the score for himself.

She was just a passenger.

And when it all came crashing down one night in the middle of a busted liquor store, **he pointed the finger square at her.**

She took the fall.

Six years.

Six broken years behind bars while he walked free.

She never saw him again.

Never got an apology.

Just time.

Time to cry.

Time to think.

Until she got out.

Until the book.

It appeared in the dining room of the group home. Pastel pink. No spine cracks. It looked like it didn't belong.

The cover read:

"How To Stay Sober"

At first, she thought it was another joke. Some 12-step leftovers that one of the counselors had left lying around.

But when she opened it, **her name was already written inside.**

In gold ink.

She slammed it shut.

But that night, as she lay on her bed, **the book began to glow.**

Dim at first. Then warmer. Stronger.

She reached for it. Hands trembling.

The first page simply said:

"You are a survivor."

She exhaled, her body shivering under the weight of that truth.

CHAPTER 13: MOVING FORWARD

Eliza started small. Baby steps. She joined the kitchen crew at the group home. Cleaned dishes. Cut onions. Learned to laugh again. Even cooked from a recipe she'd learned from a girl she once bunked with inside.

One afternoon, while working a community fair, she saw a woman showing a book to a large crowd of people.

It was Ruby.

She watched her for twenty minutes before she approached.

Their conversation was short. Honest. Real. She saw the glow in her hands. She saw the wisdom in her eyes. **Ruby** invited her to a community event called “**Books for Life,**” where she met **Teagan, Emma, and Theresa.**

They were all different. But the glow of the book had touched them all.

It bonded them like family.

They spoke on stage. Told their stories. Pledged funds. Opened centers.

She got clean and opened her own dance studio.

She called it **Rainlight Studio.**

The mission? **To help girls like her: broken, battered, and discarded to feel the rhythm again. To find their own center through movement, healing, and music.**

Her favorite student was a girl named **Nia** who reminded her of herself **minus the pain.**

Eliza vowed to keep it that way.

One night, after closing the studio, she walked home in the fog. The streets were silent. The neon of a nearby bodega flickered like it was unsure

whether to stay or go.

She reached into her bag. **The book was still there.**

She opened the last page.

"You were never lost. Just waiting to be found."

As she closed it, a soft voice in the breeze whispered, **"You made it, Eliza. Now help them make it too."**

She looked to the sky.

Seattle was still wet. But tonight, it wasn't crying.

It was dancing.

It was weeks later, in the quiet of her studio, that **Eliza's** past threatened to return. She had just finished helping a young girl with her first solo when she heard the news about the man who once stole everything from her.

Word on the street said he was back in Seattle.

Same schemes.

Same poison trail.

At first, rage gripped her. The old, buried urge to confront him, humiliate him, even hurt him.

That night, the book pulsed again.

When she opened it, a new page glowed in soft pastel pink, just like her childhood bedroom walls, back when Jazz routines were her whole world.

Back when she still believed in things like hope.

The page read:

"Revenge is a second wound. Healing is the cure."

Eliza clutched the book to her chest and sobbed until her chest felt hollow and clean.

She didn't need revenge. She needed renewal.

She started journaling again. Composed small melodies on her keyboard. Every heartbreak. Every betrayal. Every dark corner of her story she turned

into Jazz...not bitter, but bold. Beautiful.

The book continued to glow with her growth.

And then, one afternoon, a letter arrived at her studio.

Revolution Records.

"We heard your songs."

They had picked up her demo, songs she'd written while in the group home. One of the label's producers had stumbled across it at a community showcase and passed it along to a band that had been changing the world with their own story of redemption.

The band's lead singer? **Trevor.**

They reached out. Asked to meet.

The first meeting felt surreal: **Trevor** shook her hand like they had known each other forever. When he saw the pastel pink book in her bag, he smiled without saying a word.

He didn't need to explain. **He just knew.**

Within weeks, **Eliza** was brought on tour, not as a background player, but as a featured Jazz musician to perform and record on a collaborative album with **Trevor's** band.

The album soared to #1 on the charts.

But more than that, it meant something. Every track told a story of healing. Of survival. Of starting over.

And for **Eliza**, it meant dancing in arenas filled with light. Writing lyrics that became songs that she could sing. Composing music that she could play with the instruments of life. Watching the youth in the crowd mouth her words like prayers.

She had stepped out of shadows and into purpose.

On the final night of the tour, as the stage lights dimmed and the roar of the crowd settled into silence, **Trevor** handed her the mic.

She stood at the center of the stage, holding her pink book in one hand.

“I used to think this was just paper and ink,” she said, her voice raw but steady. “But this book? It’s a mirror. It shows you who you were... and who you could be, if you fight like hell for it.”

The arena exploded with applause.

Somewhere in the crowd, **she swore she saw him.** The man from her past.

Watching.

But she **didn’t** flinch. **She didn’t break.**

She smiled.

Not for him.

But for her.

CHAPTER 14: NEON SILENCE

Florida's heat didn't feel warm: **it felt punishing.** The sun beat down like a judge with no mercy, and **Max** walked through it, barefoot and broken, **shuffling like a ghost with nowhere to haunt.**

His skin was leathery, streaked with dirt and scabbed from years of abuse. **His eyes were yellow.**

Not from Jaundice, though maybe that too, but from neon club lights, chemical highs, and nights that bled into years. For **Max**, time didn't pass. **It dissolved.**

He hadn't eaten in two days. The McDonald's dumpster was a familiar friend.

It didn't ask questions.

It just offered scraps.

That's where he found it.

Buried between a flattened burger box and a moldy bag of fries was a book. Clean. Pristine.

Glowing like it didn't belong in this world.

Neon yellow.

On the cover, embossed in bold letters:

"How To Stay Sober"

He chuckled. **"Cute,"** he muttered, stuffing it into the inside of his filthy coat anyway.

He didn't plan to read it.

Books didn't feed you.

Didn't hug you.

Didn't care.

Not like he cared. **Not like anyone had ever cared.**

His earliest memory was a foster home with peeling wallpaper and fists that talked louder than words.

By the time he was **six**, he'd learned that love had conditions. Mostly silence and survival. By **twelve**, he was gone...runaway, throwaway, nobody.

He sold himself before he even understood what that meant. It didn't matter.

Money was money.

And numb was better than pain.

Until that night.

He sat under a bridge, the book on his lap. He finally cracked it open.

The first page read:

"You are not trash. You are treasure buried beneath pain."

He blinked. **Once. Twice.**

Then, something broke. Not violently. Not loudly. Quietly, like ice melting into tears.

CHAPTER 15: YOU FOUND ME

Max closed the book and tucked it under his arm. He didn't know why, but he stood up, his legs weak. He stumbled out from under the bridge and made his way to the bus station.

Maybe he could find a shelter.

He stepped onto the bus without paying. The driver, a heavyset man with a voice like thunder, barked at him, **"Hey! Are you paying or not? I've seen you before. This time if you can't pay, I'm calling the cops!"**

Max froze.

He couldn't go back to jail. **Not again.**

Then, a voice from the back of the bus:

"I've got his fare."

A girl stepped forward. Brown eyes. Freckles. Denim jacket. There was something hauntingly familiar about her.

She handed the driver the bus fare and walked up to **Max**.

He stared at her like he was seeing a ghost.

"...Amber?"

She smiled. **"Hey, Max."**

His knees almost gave out. **"What are you doing here?"**

"I've been looking for you. For years."

He shook his head. **"Why? My family...they left me."**

Her smile went away. She touched his arm.

“Max... you were kidnapped.”

The world tilted.

“Your parents...they never stopped looking. They thought you were dead. But they saw one of your mugshots. We've been trying to find you ever since.”

His eyes filled with tears.

“No one wanted me...”

Amber’s voice cracked. **“That’s not true.”**

He collapsed into her arms.

The bus rolled on.

The city lights blurred into soft neon smears.

The book glowed brighter than ever.

Amber looked down. **“What’s that?”**

Max smiled through the tears. **“Hope. It’s... hope.”**

They rode in silence, their hands clasped.

No more sales.

No more shame.

Just the first steps of something **real**.

And from his lap, the yellow book pulsed with quiet power.

The next chapter of Max’s life had started to begin.

CHAPTER 16: THE LAST LIGHT

The trees of Oregon stood tall and quiet, as if mourning something long gone. Moss clung to the bark like time **refusing to let go**. Yelina walked slowly through the damp streets of Eugene, her cane tapping on the pavement like a metronome of memories.

She was 71, with brittle bones and skin like paper, but her eyes still held flickers of wildfire. They were **tired eyes, tired of grief, of funerals, of being the one left behind**. Every friend she'd grown up with, shared secrets with, danced with at midnight house parties, had long since faded into the abyss of addiction and death.

"Guess I'm next," she muttered to herself one day as she tossed wilted flowers into the river, one for each of her lost.

She wasn't using as much as she used to, not anymore.

But she wasn't living either. Each day felt like the final page of a book she didn't remember writing.

Then, one cloudy afternoon as she passed the library, something caught her eye.

A book. Placed on a bench. Wrapped in old silk. Dark grey like the fog that blanketed her mornings.

It simply read:

"How To Stay Sober"

Yelina chuckled darkly. **"A little late, aren't you?"** she whispered, expecting it to disappear like everything else.

But it didn't.

She brought it home, unwrapped it gently, and opened the first page. A message appeared in bold, silver script:

"If you're reading this, it's because you're not done yet."

The book warmed her palms. A strange comfort. A pulse.

That night, the names of her fallen friends began to fill the margins of the pages, not as warnings, **but as tributes and short descriptions of who they were before the darkness.** How they laughed. What they dreamed of. **Who they tried to become.**

Yelina cried, reading every name.

For the first time in decades, she didn't feel alone.

She began attending storytelling circles at a local recovery center. Not to grieve, **but to guide.** Younger people listened. They leaned in. They saw someone who had lost everything and was still standing.

She wrote letters to families who had lost children. **She became a sponsor, a grandmother figure, a historian of healing.**

And the book? **It stayed by her side.** Some nights it glowed so softly it replaced her need for a nightlight. It grew heavier, fuller, like it had absorbed her grief and repurposed it.

She went to bed alone and woke up alone.

But Yelina hadn't always been alone.

Once, there was **Maya.**

They'd met in the dusty warmth of a record store, both of them young and thumbing through crates of vinyl they couldn't afford. **Yelina** had been wearing a corduroy jacket two sizes too big, sleeves covered in tiny pen doodles. **Maya** wore a sunflower in her braid and hummed along to **Janis Joplin** spinning overhead.

They became inseparable. Hitchhiking their way out of the Midwest, chasing music festivals, painted buses, and dreams that smelled like wildflowers and freedom.

They called themselves the **"Wild of the Wind."**

From Illinois to Colorado, Utah to California, they followed a trail of drum circles, gas station sandwiches, and strangers who shared cigarettes and substances like they were communion.

This was a different time.

A different era.

Eventually, the trail led them to Oregon. Their final stop.

But nothing prepared them for what came next.

CHAPTER 17: NEEDED YOU

Maya was the first to fall in love: with a man who carried a substance known as “**H**” in a guitar case and wrote poems on napkins. **Yelina didn’t trust him**, but **Maya** glowed whenever he looked her way. And when he offered her some “**just to see what the stars felt like,**” she took it.

That was the beginning of the end.

Yelina tried to pull her back. Tried to scream louder than the drug did. But one cold January morning, she found **Maya** curled on the floor of their shared yurt, a hypodermic instrument still in her arm and her sunflower braid undone.

Maya was gone.

Yelina carried the guilt every day

Decades passed like a fever dream.

She floated through communes, halfway houses, and tent cities, her skin thinned by weather and grief. **Most of her friends were now ashes or ghosts.**

Some had simply walked off the cliffs of sorrow.

Others overdosed and never got the chance to be revived.

By the time she reached old age, **Yelina** no longer danced barefoot in meadows.

She shuffled.

Shivered.

Survived.

And she waited.

Waited to be next.

The world was slick with drizzle and shadows.

She opened her book for comfort.

And there it was. Written in elegant handwriting, not hers but meant for her:

"You were the light in someone else's storm. Don't forget that now."

Tears erupted from her like lava. She fell to the ground, holding the book to her soul.

She slept with it under her blanket that night.

Over the next few weeks, things changed.

The book didn't offer commandments. It offered memories. One page asked:

"What did Maya teach you about love?"

Another asked:

"What song did you both sing the night you hitched to Oregon?"

Yelina remembered.

She wept.

She sang Janis Joplin under her breath.

She stopped using completely.

She showed up again to the local recovery group, dirt still under her fingernails, but soul open.

She told more of her story, and the room fell silent.

A young man in the back approached her afterward. Said, **"You sound like my grandmother. I wish she was still alive."**

Yelina took that pain and turned it into something sacred.

She began journaling every memory. **The wind swept plains of Illinois. The taste of peach cobbler Maya once shared with her at a diner. The way laughter sounded in canyons.**

She started a podcast with the help of a young woman named **Rae.**

They called it: **"Ashes in the Rain"**

One morning, she woke to find the book glowing.

It pulsed like a heartbeat.

She opened to the last page.

"Forgiveness isn't about forgetting. It's about remembering without chains."

She walked to the coast that day. Stood barefoot in the sand.

She had made multiple copies of a photo of her and **Maya** from back in the days of their youth.

She spread one of them into the wind.

"You will always be my best friend. I still love you," she whispered. **"And I love myself now, too."**

And with that, she walked back toward the city.

Toward life.

CHAPTER 18: THE ROOM OF LIGHT

The sun rose gently over the pine-covered hills of Idaho, casting gold-tipped shadows across the campus of "**Hollow Creek Recovery Retreat**"

Once a crumbling lodge, now rebuilt into a sprawling treatment and wellness center, it had become a sanctuary: one whispered about in meetings, shared in recovery circles, and found in the pages of glowing books.

This weekend was special.

Word had spread about it. A quiet celebration.

No social media posts.

No press.

Just a meeting of hearts and stories.

People came from across the country. Some by car, some by bus, some on foot, following the invisible thread that had tied them all together.

Each had a story.

Each had held a book.

The main lodge was filled with food, laughter, hugs, the smell of strong coffee, and the sound of healing.

There were multiple rooms, each holding small gatherings, workshops, meditations, shared meals, art therapy. **But Room 28 was different.**

Inside that softly lit space, **nine chairs had been arranged in a perfect circle.**

And one by one, they came.

Teagan: Stoic and soft-spoken, his eyes deep with hard-earned peace.

Ruby: Still fierce, still glowing, her accent softened with gratitude.

Emma: In tailored linen, graceful, her Every Moment, Make Amazing charm bracelet gently jingling as she sipped chamomile tea.

Theresa: Newly confident, strong willed, notebook in hand, no longer apologizing for existing.

Adam: Eyes brighter now, his laughter booming, a tiny red bookmark poking out of his back pocket.

Diego: Dressed in a suit jacket with the pin of his city's seal, hands calloused from work and hope.

Eliza: Wearing the tour merch, her eyes scanning the ceiling like it was a Jazz rhythm.

Max: Clean shaven, fresh-faced, the scent of his cologne faint and real, fingers resting over his book like it was an old friend.

Yelina: Older than the rest, wiser than most, sitting with her back straight, her grey book in her lap, still glowing faintly.

They all looked toward the door. As if expecting something. **Or someone.**

And then

Click

The door opened. **A figure stepped inside.**

Hoodie pulled tight, sleeves too long, eyes wide with fear and something else. Something they were clutching close to them. **A book.**

Its cover glowed, flickering like a candle about to grow into flame.

The person hesitated.

Everyone watched them.

Then **Emma** smiled, and the others followed.

Theresa gave a small wave. **Yelina** moved her bag from the empty chair beside her.

The person sighed with relief.

Then they walked forward, each step like a confession. **They sat.**

The book in their lap began to glow.

Like it recognized the others.

Like it knew the person was home.

The door closed behind them with a soft ***click***

And in the quiet stillness, before anyone spoke, the warmth of healing hummed through the room like a song only they could hear.

They came from cities and coasts, from streets and studios, prisons and parks, pain and poetry.

They were broken.

But they did not stay that way.

Each of them had been swallowed by darkness: **substances, shame, betrayal, loss. Yet somewhere, somehow, the book had found them.**

Or maybe...

They had found themselves.

And that person who walked into **Room 28?**

Their name is still being written.

Maybe it's your name.

THE END.

To you, the reader:

If you are holding this book, know this

You are not alone.

You are not broken beyond repair.

You are not your mistakes.

You are not your darkest day.

**You are not your relapse, your silence, or the weight you've been
carrying for too long.**

YOU ARE POSSIBLE.

***SOBRIETY IS NOT
IMPOSSIBLE***

**And maybe your own glowing book hasn't appeared just yet...but look
again.**

***IT MIGHT BE CLOSER
THAN YOU THINK.***

Keep fighting. Keep healing. Keep trying.

***BECAUSE EVERY
MOMENT, YOU CAN
MAKE AMAZING.***

There will always be a seat waiting for you in the circle.

ALWAYS.

— The Survivors

—
“Stay strong and remember...we all believe in you...especially me.” - Tre
Tademy.

HOW TO STAY SOBER

By Bestselling Author Tre Tademmy

In "*How to Stay Sober*," Tre Tademmy delivers an inspiring and transformative guide that tackles one of the most pressing challenges of our time: **addiction**. Drawing upon his **extensive knowledge, experience, and deep understanding of recovery**, Tademmy combines personal anecdotes, practical advice, and evidence-based strategies to illuminate the path to sobriety.

Meet nine relatable characters: **Teagan, Ruby, Emma, Theresa, Adam, Diego, Eliza, Max, and Yelina**, each on their unique journey towards healing. Their stories reflect the struggles, setbacks, and triumphs that countless individuals experience when battling addiction. **Through their eyes, readers will find reflections of their own challenges and hope for a brighter future.**

Tademmy emphasizes the importance of community and self-discovery, offering readers essential tools to navigate the complexities of sobriety. With compassion and honesty, "*How to Stay Sober*", opens the door to understanding that recovery is not just a destination: it's a lifelong journey filled with opportunities for growth.